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By Anna Hempstead Branch

ROSE OF THE WIND.

THE SHOES THAT DANCED, AND OTHER  
POEMS.

THE HEART OF THE ROAD, AND OTHER  
POEMS.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY  
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

# THE HEART OF THE ROAD *and Other Poems*

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BY ANNA HEMPSTEAD BRANCH

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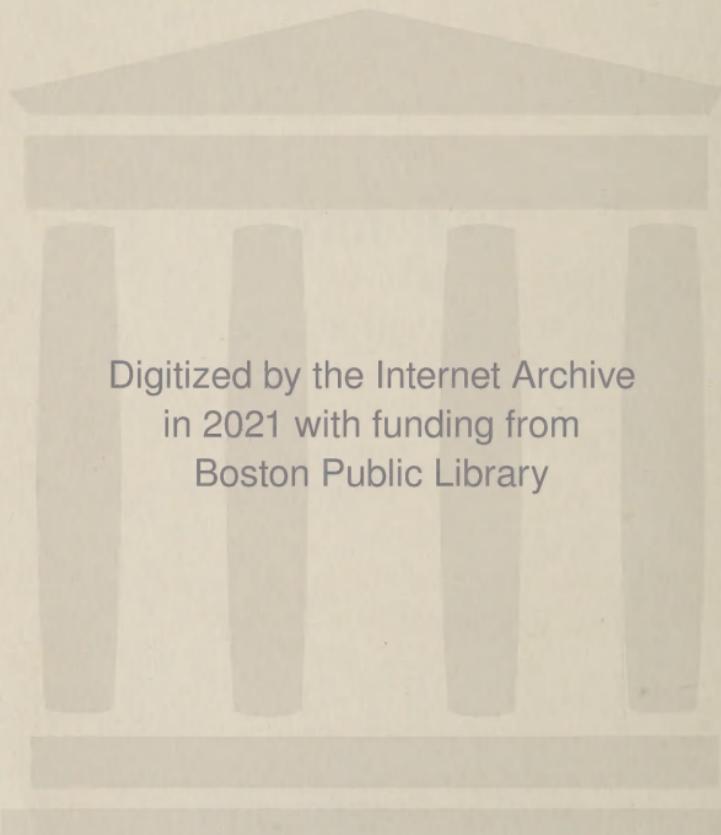
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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY  
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*Published November, 1901*

TO  
MY MOTHER  
AND  
FATHER



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## THE HEART OF THE ROAD

I JOURNEY on an endless quest,  
The eager miles are swift to run,  
While up the hill and toward the west  
My red leagues travel against the sun.

*Behold, one journeyed in the night,  
He sang amid the wind and rain ;  
My wet sands gave his feet delight.  
When will that traveler come again ?*

Some house them with their kin inside,  
Some habit to the ends of earth ;  
Strange is the heart of them that bide,  
But I was fugitive from birth.

The folk that tarry are not my sons ;  
My heart is all for them that roam ;  
My thought goes with the wandering ones  
That spend the night from home.

The weary folk lead to and fro,  
And he is dear that takes no rest ;

Mine are those feet that come and go,  
But, lo, my firstborn was my best !

“ Heart of the Road,” I heard him sing,  
“ Whose thought is swift, whose ways are wild,  
The mother of my wandering  
Shall have the pilgrim for her child.”

How did he find me where I lay,  
Remote, untraversed, and forespent ?  
How blithe I journey since the day  
That he conceived the ways I went !

That day that he fared forth alone  
His feet besought me in their need.  
I cried out of my dust and stone,  
“ Lo, my own breast shall make thee bleed ! ”

I cried out from my rock and steep,  
“ My child, I cannot give thee rest ! ”  
He moved the stone that grieved my sleep,  
And soothed the sharp thorn from my breast.  
Therefore my other sons are dear,  
But still the firstborn is the best.

My will is in them night and day,  
Men and the restless sons of men.

The paths are smooth wherein they stray.  
When will that traveler come again ?

Thick as the dust, from unborn years,  
I see my coming children throng.  
That one who breaks the way with tears  
Many shall follow with a song.

Nor bread, nor scrip, nor staff had he  
When he went out from the gray town.  
Now heavy folk that traverse me  
Burdened with wealth go up and down.

Each unto each I hear them call  
With idle speech and empty boast,  
And I have ease to give them all  
Save him that I did love the most.

*But when one passes in the night,  
And tarries not by any door,  
My leagues beat upward for delight,—  
Perchance that traveler comes once more.*

*But when one journeys over me,  
Nor staff, nor scrip, through wind and rain,  
I reach my dim hands out to see  
If those old feet have come again.*

## THE HEART OF THE ROAD

Therefore upon an endless quest  
My eager miles are swift to run,  
While up the hill and toward the west  
My red leagues travel against the sun.

## THE THOUGHT OF THE LITTLE BROTHER

MATTHEW, Mark, Luke, and John,  
Bless the bed that I lie on.  
All night long in bed I lie  
With four disciples standing by.

Matthew's clothes shine like the sun ;  
He guards me well, and he is one.  
Mark is two, and Luke is three,  
And dear St. John smiles down on me.

(Brother Berthold that cannot rest,  
For the cross of thorns pierced in his breast,  
Walks all night with haggard eyes  
And “Lord have mercy, mercy !” cries.)

Crimson and blue and green have they,  
But I must go in stuff of gray ;  
Blue and green and red and gold,  
Their warm robes shut me from the cold.  
They all bend over and talk and sing,  
And I can tell them everything.

## 6 THOUGHT OF THE LITTLE BROTHER

Brother Benedictus says  
A good child should be filled with praise  
From morning-song till even-song,  
And holy dreams the whole night long.  
For if you dream of Jesus, then  
You will be blessed among men.

So at night I shut my eyes  
When the dear Lord walks in Paradise,  
Saying “ Christ, Christ, Christ ! ” to bring him  
near.

If he were little, would he hear ?  
And would his mother tell him nay  
If I should ask him out to play ?  
If I could dream of Jesus, then  
I should be blessed among men !

*But — the thorn has a flower by the old gray wall,  
Ursyne throws me her scarlet ball,  
The blind priest says, “ Did an apple fall ? ”  
I cannot dream of Christ at all !*

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,  
Bless the bed that I lie on.

Once Mark leaned down to me and smiled  
“ The Child Christ dreamed such dreams, dear  
child ! ”

Brother Benedictus says  
 There is no life save only praise ;  
 He says the poppies red as flame  
 Grew so to mind me of my shame.  
 “ It was thy thought that had him die,  
 Thyself unborn did crucify.”  
 And then I cannot help but cry —  
 That let the dear Lord Jesus die.

But Luke had a garment all of red.  
 He hugged and kissed me, and he said,  
 “ He loves not that his child should weep,  
 Sleep, little Brother,” — and I sleep.

Once Ursyne on a cloth of blue  
 Must stitch, as all girl children do.  
 She pricked her finger, and the thread  
 That was so white was turned to red.  
 The mother would not let her cry,  
 Nor break the thread and lay it by : —  
 “ For Christ will love thy work,” she said,  
 “ And bless it where the blood was shed.”

(Out in the cold Brother Berthold  
 Walks through the night, so haggard and old ;  
 If a cock should crow I should hear him call, —  
 “ Peter and Paul — pray for us all —  
 Pray for us all ! ”)

## 8 THOUGHT OF THE LITTLE BROTHER

Brother Benedictus says  
That if we walk the paths of praise  
We may meet angels there ! I know  
For my own self that this is so.

To-day I lost my ball, and where  
My eyes might search it was not there.  
But since we should give praise for all,  
I praised God that I lost my ball.  
And then a lovely angel came,  
With long green wings and locks of flame.  
Out of the grass where I'd searched an hour  
He plucked it like a scarlet flower ;  
And then I kissed him, and his wings  
Drooped round me like dear living things.

Brother Berthold is best of all.  
He planted brambles by the wall ;  
He scourged himself, and every stone  
In his dark cell has blood thereon ;  
He blinded his own eyes, that so  
He might see angels come and go.  
I told him all those blessed things, —  
The ball, the kiss, the darling wings.  
He cried aloud. “ Child, child,” said he,  
“ Would those great wings might comfort me ! ”

(Out in the cold Brother Berthold  
Walks all night so haggard and old.  
He beats his breast, with sightless eyes,  
And, " Mercy, mercy, mercy !" cries.)

Brother Benedictus says  
There is no life save only praise;  
And there is not a child too young  
To serve Him with a golden tongue.  
Be we man or beast or clod,  
Praise God — praise God !

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,  
Bless the bed that I lie on.

Blue and green and red and gold,  
Their warm robes shut me from the cold.

Peter and Paul, pray for us all !  
*'T was a bough of ripe quinces hung over the wall !*  
Mark is two, and Luke is three ;  
John had a rose, but he gave it to me !

*Ursyne's got a gown o' gray —*  
*They let her into the court to play.*  
(Let me dream of Christ I pray)  
*I picked her a quince to eat to-day —*

## THE ROAD 'TWIXT HEAVEN AND HELL

LAST night my lord was not at home—

“ Nay ; I was out on moor and fell,”  
And thy black horse is frothed with foam,

As thou didst drive him well—

“ He galloped all night, till dawn grew white,  
On the road 'twixt heaven and hell.”

How does it look along that road ?

“ The chasm is steep and sheer,  
Slippery for footing and heavily trod,

And the rocks are ragged and drear.

The wind of death blows over the heath  
And into the soul like fear.”

What didst thou see along the track ?

“ A scurry of leaves wind-tossed,  
White like faces thrust out of the black,  
Thinned and edged with the frost.  
They whirled about till they all went out  
Into the night and were lost.”

What was that sound I thought I heard  
When I was lain in bed ?  
“ Maybe the sullen rock that stirred  
Beneath my horse’s tread.  
Three times, I say, that rock gave way  
And plunged among the dead.”

The first time that the rock gave way,  
What was it kept thee back ?  
“ ’T was thy soft hand upon the rein  
That held me to the track.  
Thy face shone white along the night  
And laughed out of the black.”

Nay, then, it was no hand of mine,  
For I was safe in bed !  
“ I swear by God that hand was thine  
By which my steed was led,  
Else were I lost and a thin ghost  
That smokes among the dead !

“ With desolate sighs that way was full,  
And I rode there alone.  
Sometimes there was a grinning skull  
That I mistook for stone,  
And every rock my steed’s hoofs struck  
Was thin like empty bone.”

The next time that the rock gave way,  
What kept thee from the rim ?  
“ My struggling steed strove hard for speed ;  
He leaped from brim to brim.  
To my cold breast my child clung fast ;  
I could not fall with him ! ”

Nay, then, it was no child of thine,  
For he is not yet born !  
“ And had it not been child of mine,  
That way had been forlorn.  
I held him tight through the dark night,  
And even until the morn.

“ The fear that bounded close behind  
Was like a lean dog held at bay.  
I felt his hot breath on the wind,  
And I dared not to stay.  
Like a bloodhound that seeks the wound,  
He followed all the way.”

The third time that the rock gave way,  
What was it helped thee then ?  
“ That path that broke before, behind,  
Cried out like living men.  
And far below, like sluggish snow,  
Slow things moved through the fen.

“ The woman running at my side,  
Who had a bleeding breast,  
Even as a star swings off the tide,  
She cleared that chasm deep and wide,  
Nor stopped one whit to rest.  
We whirled behind ; like the storm-wind  
We followed in her quest.

“ I felt her tears blown through my heart,  
Cold as a blast of winter rain.  
The blood she shed had left me dead,  
Had I not eased her pain.  
I pressed my kisses on her mouth,  
And we sped on again ! ”

That woman running at thy side,  
Why should she bleed for thee ?  
I had rather that thou last night had died,  
Than not be saved by me.  
My breast is whole as mine own soul,  
And is as fair to see !

“ What then ? dost thou forget that road  
All blackened with the storm ?  
Hast thou no memory for the goad  
That pierced thy hurrying form ?  
Thyself for cold cried in the wold ;  
Hast thou so soon grown warm ? ”

That, in God's truth, my soul went out  
    To help thee in that need,  
I cannot then keep more in doubt,  
    Since thou hast seen me bleed;  
But that in the wold I cried for cold  
    I have forgot indeed!

If, in God's truth, my spirit went  
    To where thy course was set,†  
I have forgotten how I was spent,  
    My wounds I do forget;  
But there shall be one memory —  
    Thy kiss is on me yet!

Last night my lord was not at home —  
    “ Nay; I was out on the moor and fell.”  
And thy black horse is frothed with foam,  
    As thou didst drive him well —  
“ He galloped all night, till the dawn grew white,  
    On the road 'twixt heaven and hell.”

## THE SHADOW OF A CLOUD

*All day the small cloud floated by  
Like a white bird beneath the sun.  
There was never a cloud in all the sky  
As white as that least one.*

“ All day long,” quoth the little gray shadow,  
“ I climb this hillside green and steep.  
The shepherd sings to his flocks all day,  
But I am not his to keep.  
My ways are wide, though I be gray  
As the least wayworn sheep.”

“ I dream, I dream,” quoth the little gray shadow,  
“ And in my dreams there be  
A blowing cloak and the breath of a pipe,  
And many a one like me.  
My shepherd is in my dreams ; my ways  
Are with his song,” quoth he.

“ Along the road o’ the wind and sun  
I journey up the mountain-side,

And there are flowers or dust or stone  
In the places where I bide,  
And there is wind in the thick green grass,  
And birds at eventide."

*All day the small cloud floated by  
Like a white lily under the sun.  
There was never a cloud in all the sky  
As white as that least one.*

"I dream, I dream," quoth the little gray shadow,  
"In sooth, I do not know,  
But on those wild wind-hills I see  
A white cloud come and go.  
Like wind in grass amid my dreams  
The stars weave to and fro.

"My heart is strange," quoth the little gray  
shadow,  
"My thoughts are strange and far.  
The bird in the grass has brushed his wings,  
Sings he, against a star!"  
The shadow i' the grass has leagues to run  
Where the brown earth pastures are.

"I dream, I dream," quoth the little gray shadow,  
That slipped over water and stone.

“ All day I sing to myself in my heart  
That I travel or tarry alone,  
But the bird in the grass has touched a cloud,  
And my ways are not my own! ”

*All day the small cloud floated by  
Alone in the wide space under the sun.  
There was never a cloud in all the sky  
As white as that least one.*

## THE KEEPER OF THE HALFWAY HOUSE

MANY an one has come and bode  
But to leave me sorrow.  
With the dawn they take the road  
And I say "Good morrow."

"Tell us, keeper of the Inn,  
Hast thou rest inside?"  
These shall come where those have been,  
And not one shall bide.

They will linger for a night  
At this hearth of mine,  
Stay their souls unto delight  
With my bread and wine.

Even he I loved the best  
Might not loiter here,  
So I sped my parting guest  
With abundant cheer.

“ Brother, what ’s the road,” they say,  
“ We must travel on ? ”

So I show them up the way  
Where I have not gone.

Think of me, all ye that go,  
Ye that tarry not !  
But up the road a league or so  
And lo, they have forgot.

So I do not smile to see  
One knocking at the door.  
That one in sooth shall fare from me  
As they have fared before.

So it is I am content,  
Beside a vacant chair.  
Long before the day is spent  
One will be sitting there.

“ Tell us, Keeper of the Inn,  
Hast thou rest inside ? ”  
These shall come where those have been  
And not one shall bide.

## HEART OF MY SONG

HEART of my song — if my own heart  
    Lies barren for its pain,  
And all my thoughts shall beat apart  
    Over an empty plain,  
Thy thoughts like singing birds shall fly  
    Athwart my falling rain.

Heart of my heart — since God has said  
    Mine shall not throb alone,  
I cannot leave thy wide, deep ways  
    To which my soul has grown.  
Like wind among the leaves thy mood  
    Is wrought into my own.

I feel no splendor and no might  
    That gives not thee the praise.  
Thy lordly blood has set my own  
    Into more stately ways.  
Thy centuries blow from out my eyes  
    The thick dust of the days.

Thy thoughts are in my thoughts as sound

Is in the rain, and so

Thy memories are all around,

Whether I will or no.

I have a dream of dawns that broke

Hundreds of years ago.

I have before I yet was born

A thought of those vague years.

Thou who didst breathe in God's first morn,

Who beat in God's first spheres,

Art in my dreams for early light,

And in my heart for tears.

For even as the wind that blows

And sings from star to star,

May help the timid grass that grows,

That cannot fly so far,

Thou dwellest in me with the light

Of all the worlds that are.

Heart of my heart, heart of my song,

Though I go wandering,

Thou laughest in me all day long

Like flowers in the spring.

Thou art not saddened by my tears,

But thou art strong to sing.

## ALL YE YOUNG POETS

ALL ye young Poets, crowding up with eyes  
Yet wistful with the morning, and who throng  
Silently yet with the first love of song  
And ways made delicate with your surprise,  
On whom the seal and the fair promise lies,  
Come up to the broad ways where ye belong  
Paven with golden echoings and strong  
As stalwart stars set close along the skies.  
As surely will ye come from the dim years  
As changes, seasons, or as unborn daisies.  
We doubt these not, nor ye, who are God's own,  
But bid ye welcome to our songless spheres  
And watch lest he who most deserves our praises  
Shall come forsaken, bleeding and alone.

## SONNET IN THE NIGHT

COME gently, Sleep, and let me rest to-night  
With no disturbing dream of angel's wings.  
Bring no song in thy heart that sings and sings  
Like a bird amid thy skies of calm delight.  
Oh wake me not with these, but heal my sight  
Of inner visions, cure the subtle stings  
Of too great pleasure, lull the murmurings  
Of thy dear dreams ! Oh, do not shine so bright !  
For I would rest and stint myself to thought.  
Nay, get thee from my sleep, thou lovely dear !  
Why wilt thou gather round me so, enringing ?  
And then a voice replies, " His hand has wrought  
A sound in thy soul's raiment thou dost hear,  
Poor child, that cannot rid thyself of singing."

## THE SILENCE OF THE POETS

I BETTER like that shadowed side of things  
In which the Poets wrote not; when they went  
Unto the fullness of their great content  
Like moths into the grass with folded wings.  
The silence of the Poets with it brings  
The other side of moons, and it is spent  
In love, in sorrow, or in wonderment.  
After the silence, maybe a bird sings.  
I have heard call, as Summer calls the swallow,  
A leisure, bidding unto ways serene  
To be a child of winds and the blue hazes.  
“Dream” — quoth the Dreamer — and ’t is  
sweet to follow!  
So Keats watched stars rise from his meadows  
green,  
And Chaucer spent his hours among the daisies.

## HAUNTED

I AM distraught with singing. In my brain  
I feel a presence ever, and a might  
Pursues my soul in flashes of long light  
Or soft as throbbing of a golden rain,  
Till my whole spirit melts into refrain  
And I am wakened even in the night  
By delicate visions that beset my sight,  
The clinging sweetness of a perfect strain.  
I am distraught with singing! Never more  
Shall I go with my friends in the old ways.  
In other orbits do my paths belong  
And other hands will beckon me before.  
God sets a wonder upon all my days,  
And I am haunted always by a song.

## UNTAMED

WHO is there that can pipe up buds unblown,  
Who is there that can charm the winds that pass,  
And who is there can lead the early grass  
To press another way than it has grown ?  
To many another has my spirit flown,  
But never has it found that one, alas !  
Who could shed himself on everything that was,  
Like wind on water, sunshine upon stone.  
These are all haunted by so great a might  
No other power can tame them. Their vague  
eyes  
Are full of dawns and shadows of surprise,  
And they are aureoled with their own light.  
Grass has its Heaven and the winds their skies.  
They wot not of us with their wistful sight.

## FORESHADOWED

WHAT? Thou art jealous of my past, while yet  
I was unknown to thee, while my first years  
Were sweet without thee, and with my own tears,  
Not thine, Belovéd, my young eyes were wet?  
But I can tell thee that before we met  
Thy splendor dropped athwart those golden spheres  
Which were my childhood. All my joys and  
fears  
Were strangely double. I shall not forget  
That look I loved so in my mother's eyes.  
Her glance I think did so contain thine own  
I felt a dim foreshadowing cast on me  
And read thy star concealed amid her skies.  
I cannot remember that first look alone  
Without some reminiscences of thee.

## WHERE NO THOUGHTS ARE

WHEN all my will drops from me like a shroud  
From the fair dead when they go up on high,  
And leaves my soul like sky, blue sky, all sky,  
Without a wind or sunshine or the loud  
Incessant flitting of the thoughts that crowd  
Like swallows to the summer time, then I,  
Looking straight upward through myself, descry  
A beautiful face more vague than wind or cloud  
That from its Heaven searches into mine  
And bends to me, even as a star to star.  
But if I think, back will the faint clouds roll.  
Sometimes I wonder if it be divine —  
If that be God, up there where no thoughts are —  
Or if I see the face of my own soul.

## DIVINITY

My silences are not my own, for lo  
Thy speech is in them always ; I abide  
In waiting for thee, as the eventide  
Expects the dew ; and that thou art, I know,  
And what thou art I know not, but I go  
Hearing thy voice always, far and wide,  
Strange in its bidding, not to be denied,  
Deeper than thought, since thou wilt have it so,  
For when my thoughts are silent every one,  
Like vanished rain, and all my heart is bare  
Of any wistful dream that comes and goes,  
Thy speech falls on me subtle as the sun,  
And I receive thee as the summer air  
Is touched with the slow blooming of the rose.

## I CANNOT QUITE FORGET

MORTALITY is on me like the sleep  
Of one who dreams on banks of pleasant flowers.  
I hear the humming of gold-girdled hours  
Whirling along the sunshine, feel the deep  
And shadowy stillness into which they creep,  
Dropping like honeyed bees into their bowers.  
Such gracious dreams brings this long sleep of  
ours,  
Such gracious dreams I know not how to weep.  
The world I have forsaken for my dream.  
A strange and lingering sweetness haunts me yet,  
A visionary presence, and a light  
Creeps 'twixt my eyelids, like the slender beam  
Piercing the filmy primrose, folded tight,  
And wrapped in sleep, I cannot all forget.

## SONG OF THE WANDERING DUST

We are of one kindred, wheresoe'er we be,—  
Red upon the highroad or yellow on the plain,  
White against the sea drift that girts the heavy  
sea ;  
Thou hast made us brothers, God of wind and  
rain !

Yellow all along the fields, hey ho, the morn !  
All the throb of those old days lingers in my  
feet,  
Pleasant moods of growing grass and young laugh  
of the corn,  
And the life of the yellow dust is sweet !

When I bend my head low and listen at the  
ground,  
I can hear vague voices that I used to know,  
Stirring in dim places, faint and restless sound ;  
I remember how it was when the grass began to  
grow !

32 SONG OF THE WANDERING DUST

We are of one kindred, wheresoe'er we be,—  
Red upon the highroad or yellow on the plain,  
White against the glistening kelp that girts the  
heavy sea ;  
Thou hast made us brothers, God of wind and  
rain !

Blown along the sea beach ! Oh, but those were  
days !

How we loved the lightning, straight and keen  
and white !

Bosomed with the ribboned kelp ! Hist ! through  
all the ways

Of my brain I hear the sea, calling through the  
night.

How we used to jostle, braced together each to  
each,

When the sea came booming, stalwart, up the  
strand !

Ridged our shoulders, met the thunder, groaned  
and held the beach !

I thank the God that made me, I am brother to  
the sand !

We are of one kindred, wheresoe'er we be,—  
Red upon the highroad or yellow on the plain,

White against the sea drift that girts the heavy  
sea ;

Thou hast made us brothers, God of wind and  
rain !

Red upon the highroad that travels up to town !  
I have nigh forgotten how the old way goes.  
Ay, but I was there once, trampled up and down !  
Shod feet and bare feet, I was friend to those !

Old feet and young feet,— still within my breast  
I can feel the steady march, tread, tread, tread !  
In my heart they left their blood,— God give  
them rest !  
In my bones I feel the dust raised from their  
dead !

We are of one kindred, wheresoe'er we be,—  
Dumb along the highroad or fashioned in the  
brain ;  
Once my flesh was beaten from the white sand  
by the sea ;  
Thou hast made us brothers, God of wind and  
rain !

Red dust and yellow dust, whither shall we go ?  
Up the road and by the sea and through the  
hearts of men !

34 SONG OF THE WANDERING DUST

Red dust and yellow dust, when the great winds  
blow,

We shall meet and mingle, pass and meet again.

Red dust and yellow dust, I can feel them yet,  
On my lips and through my soul, fine-grained in  
my mood.

Still the solemn kinship calls, the old loves will  
not forget,

And my heart answers back to its blood.

Old dust and strange dust, wheresoe'er we be,—  
Red along the highroad or yellow on the plain,  
White against the sea drift that girts the heavy  
sea,

Thou hast made us brothers, God of wind and  
rain !

## TO A SONG

WHITHER wouldst thou go, Song ?  
Wilt thou away ?  
Every flock knows its fold,  
Every bird its spray.  
Whither wilt thou wander then,  
Since thou wilt not stay ?

Thou art like a wind, Song,  
Blown from very far  
Over meadows thick with grass  
Where soft whisperings are,  
With the pale light on thee still  
Shed from many a star.

Over hill and over wold  
Whence didst thou blow ?  
Whither wilt thou hurry, Song ?  
Dost thou know ?  
Nay, I will not ask thee then —  
Pilgrim in the world of men,  
Weary ones and slow —  
Thou art sweet, and like the wind  
Thou must come and go.

## AN UNBELIEVER

ALL these on whom the sacred seal was set,  
They could forsake thee while thine eyes were  
wet.

Brother, not once have I believed in thee,  
Yet having seen I cannot once forget.

I have looked long into those friendly eyes,  
And found thee dreaming, fragile and unwise.  
Brother, not once have I believed in thee,  
Yet have I loved thee for thy gracious lies.

One broke thee with a kiss at eventide,  
And he that loved thee well has thrice denied.  
Brother, I have no faith in thee at all,  
Yet must I seek thy hands, thy feet, thy side.

Behold that John that leaned upon thy breast ;  
His eyes grew heavy and he needs must rest.  
I watched unseen through dark Gethsemane  
And might not slumber, for I loved thee best.

Peace thou wilt give to them of troubled mind  
Bread to the hungry, spittle to the blind.  
My heart is broken for my unbelief,  
But that thou canst not heal, though thou art  
kind.

They asked one day to sit beside thy throne.  
I made one prayer, in silence and alone.  
Brother, thou knowest my unbelief in thee.  
Bear not my sins, for thou must bear thine own.

Even he that grieves thee most “Lord, Lord,”  
he saith,  
So will I call on thee with my last breath !  
Brother, not once have I believed in thee.  
*Yet I am wounded for thee unto death.*

## THE BALLAD OF A CHILD'S HEART

THE king who dwelt at the old gray hall  
A noble lord was he.

He had lands that were broad and treasures from  
all,

And his kingdoms they were three,  
But he had never a little child  
To sit upon his knee.

“Now would that I had a daughter,” he said,  
“To do what I should say.

She should have a silver comb for her head  
And she should laugh alway !  
Broidered raiment and cloth o’ the gold,  
And jewels for night and day !”

He rode by dark and he rode by light,  
And he rode till the days were three,  
Until he came to Fairyland,  
Where the little lost children be,  
And there he got him a fair girl-child  
To sit upon his knee.

They took off her little gown of green  
And dressed her in all that was rare.  
A silken girdle did bind her waist  
And a golden zone her hair.  
Gold on the bosom and gold on the hem  
Of the robe they made her wear.

They gave her a falcon for all her own  
And a milk-white steed to ride,  
And they let her sit on a shining throne,  
With jewels on it for pride.  
But whenever she sat and whenever she rode  
The king was at her side.

He built her a tower where she might sit  
Like a dove that rests its wing.  
He brought her a lute, but she would not play,  
And a harp but she would not sing.  
She sat all day with a dream in her eyes  
Nor laughed at anything.

“ Now what wouldst thou have, my fair girl-child,  
Now what wouldst thou have ? ” quoth he,  
“ For art thou not mine own little one  
That sittest upon my knee ?  
And what thou wishest that shalt thou have,  
For my kingdoms they are three.”

“ I have jewels to see them shine,” she said,  
“ And a golden zone for my hair,  
And why I am sorry I do not know,  
Nor, if I knew, should I care.  
But I wish that I had the little green gown  
That once I used to wear.”

“ Now dry thine eyes, my fair girl-child,  
Now dry thine eyes,” he said,  
“ For I rode all day and I rode all night  
Till my good steed dropped dead.  
But I have brought thee that little green gown  
With its merry tassels of red.”

She was silent at morn and silent at noon  
With a dream in her eyes alway,  
And her sleep at night was touched with tears  
Because she had cried all day,  
And she wished that she had the little gold ball  
With which she used to play.

“ Now dry thine eyes, my fair girl-child,  
Now dry thine eyes,” quoth he,  
“ And I will get thee that little gold ball,  
For my kingdoms they are three,  
And all that I have in my heart and hold  
Is not too good for thee.”

She was silent at noon and silent at eve,  
But he did not understand.

“ Say, why dost thou drop the silken leash  
Of the falcon from thy hand ? ”

“ I would that I had my heart,” quoth she,  
“ That I left in Fairyland.”

“ That thou shalt have, my fair girl-child,  
For my kingdoms they are three.

But how shall I tell which heart is thine  
Among so many as be ? ”

“ The tears I have shed are in it,” she said,  
“ And my mother’s memory.”

“ It is not enough, my fair girl-child,  
Is there no other thing ?  
All have had mothers and all have had tears,  
And which heart shall I bring ? ”

“ Under the laughter and under the tears  
Is my love for the Fairy King.”

“ But where shall I find thy heart ? ” he said.

“ Child, tell me where it is,  
For I will have it, if steel be true,  
So make no mysteries.”

“ It is only the king that can tell thee that,  
For I left it deep in his.”

He rode all day and he rode all night  
Till the bright walls he could see.  
“O king, I have come for the heart of a child,  
From thine own heart,” quoth he.  
“And I will have it, while steel is true  
And my kingdoms they are three.”

They fought all day and they fought all night  
In the land where all is fair.  
But the strange king saw it not nor felt  
The sweet touch of the air.  
An he had this, he had brought the child  
And left her always there.

“Now God thee save,” cried the Fairy Knight,  
“That thou couldst do this sin !  
Thou shalt wipe my blood from thy good steel  
With a wish that it had not been.  
Thou hast pierced my heart,” he cried, “and so  
The heart of the child within.”

He rode all day and he rode all night,  
And the first that met him cried,  
“Thy child's own falcon flew away  
This day at eventide.”  
And the next one said, “Thy child's white  
hound  
Upon this night hath died.”

The third that met him was pale with fear,  
And never a word he said.  
But the great king spoke as it were news,  
“ My fair girl-child is dead.”  
And they showed her asleep in her little green  
gown  
With its merry tassels of red.

The old gray king speaks never a word.  
He sits in a silent hall.  
He has lands that are broad and kingdoms three,  
And treasures from them all.  
But he sits all day with a dream in his eyes  
And plays with a golden ball.

## THE BLOOMING OF THE ROSE

WHAT is it like, to be a rose ?

*Old Roses, softly,* “ Try and see.”

Nay, I will tarry. Let me be  
In my green peacefulness and smile.  
I will stay here and dream awhile.  
'T is well for little buds to dream,  
Dream — dream — who knows —  
Say, is it good to be a rose ?  
Old roses, tell me ! Is it good ?

*Old Roses, very softly,* “ Good.”

I am afraid to be a rose !  
This little sphere wherein I wait,  
Curled up and small and delicate,  
Lets in a twilight of pure green,  
Wherein are dreams of night and morn  
And the sweet stillness of a world  
Where all things are that are unborn.

*Old Roses*, “ Better to be born.”

I cannot be a bud for long.  
My sheath is like a heart full blown,  
And I, the silence of a song  
Withdrawn into that heart alone,  
Well knowing that it shall be sung.  
Outside the great world comes and goes —  
I think I doubt, to be a rose —

*Old Roses*, “ Doubt ? To be a Rose ! ”

## THE DANCE OF ALL DEAD BONES

GOD rest us all that linger here !  
He has bleached us white with the rains of the  
year,

But this is the night of all good cheer,  
Glory Hallelujah !

He fashioned a thing of dust one day,  
He blew with the wind of His mouth, they say,  
He blessed the fire but cursed the clay,  
Hallelujah Amen !

Ribs of the old earth, wracked and rent !  
When all her loveliness is spent  
And she cannot tell which way it went —  
Glory Hallelujah ! —

And she is left as thin and pale,  
Empty, like us, and white and frail,  
She will dance and crackle along the gale,  
Hallelujah Amen !

Their souls dropped off like rain from stone,  
And whither they ran to, all alone,

We cannot tell, for we are but bone,  
Glory Hallelujah !

Their wild hearts flickered away like flame,  
They left us naked and fit for shame,  
For He made the dust that it bear the blame,  
Hallelujah Amen !

He made us dumb and cold and blind,  
Barren and brutish of our kind,  
Witless of sun and rain and wind,  
Glory Hallelujah !

When our Lord goes by He goes rough shod,  
Yet every stock and turf and sod  
Heaves in its place and cries “ Praise God,”  
Hallelujah Amen !

Those hearts went up with never a sound,  
But we rouse and rattle all around,  
Dancing a strange dance under the ground,  
Glory Hallelujah !

We have fed His fire and this atones,  
And we bless our God with the stocks and stones,  
For this is the Dance of all Dead Bones,  
Hallelujah Amen !

## IN THE QUEEN'S GARDEN

QUEEN

WHO was it took my favorite rose —  
So small and white none else I ween  
Had loved her in her world of green  
Save winds and all young things that be  
As sweet and fine and small as she —  
Prithee, who was it took my rose ?

FIRST MAID

Mayhap the little page ? —  
I found him crying at the door  
Because an hour or so before  
He ran ere yet the grass was dry  
Into the garden, and the dew  
Had spoiled the buckle on his shoe.

QUEEN

Nay, 't was not the little page ;  
A child had never thought, I know,  
To look into the grass so low ;  
A boy laughs and by he goes,  
'T was not the page that took my rose.

## NEXT MAID

It was the fool, I guess !  
I'll scold him for his wantonness.  
“ Merry men all,” I heard him sing  
‘ Twixt his strange bits of chattering,  
“ Let's get flowers, though cold wind blows ” —  
The fool, dear lady, took your rose.

## QUEEN

No, not he ! Fools look more high.  
He would have sought the red one there.  
Look you, it grows as tall as — I !  
That little world all green and cool  
Wherein my white rose sat alway,  
Had he seen that, and her, I say  
The fool no longer were a fool.  
Who was that thief who liked my rose ?

## THIRD MAID

The Prince, do you suppose ?  
He gave me — no — I think 't would be  
Like him to choose a rose, and he —  
Last night I saw him with a rose !

## QUEEN

Oh ! You saw him, did you, then ?  
It was no page, no fool, I know,

Who passed that red one, proud and tall ;  
Only a prince's heart, I trow,  
Would love my white rose best of all.  
You guessed him, you ? You saw him, then ?  
Roses and vandals, girls and men !  
Look, look you, sweet, the Prince is near !  
And I am gracious, and I ween  
He looks to find a loiterer here.  
I 'll bid him to my garden, dear,  
To take her white rose from the queen.

## BEFORE THE FAIR

FROM the crow of the cock to the shut of the day  
I toiled most of any ;  
The cow and the flock and the load of hay  
From my few pence took many ;  
I worked all day in the sweat of my brow,  
And only saved a penny.

Here's a penny for my pretty,  
Sally needs an airing ;  
She shall put a ribbon on  
And go to get a fairing !

Sally my girl so light she trips,  
And she laughs right out for glee ;  
And her warm lips are such red, red lips,  
And I won't be by to see —  
But I'll get a promise from Sally my girl,  
That she'll kiss no lad but me.

Here's a penny for my pretty,  
Sally needs an airing ;  
She shall put a ribbon on  
And go to get a fairing !

Her crimson stocking is drawn so tight,  
    Her ankle is plump and fair ;  
She 'll lead the dance till the drop o' night  
    With a posy in her hair.  
And I can think as I turn my plough,  
    My girl is the blithest there.

Here 's a penny for my pretty,  
    Sally needs an airing ;  
She shall put a ribbon on  
    And go to get a fairing !

## LAZARUS

A WOMAN

BUT let him tell us ! Peace, you idle ones,  
You talk him speechless who is full of news.  
Lazarus, speak !

THE CROWD

Ay, speak ! What is it like ?  
Is it terrible to die ? Were you afraid ?

A BOY

My grandmother died. She sobbed and shook and  
groaned  
“ Have mercy on us ! ” Then she sweat —

A MOTHER

My child !  
Did he go all alone ? O Lazarus, speak !  
Did any come for him ? Was he afraid ?

A YOUTH

Is it cold outside the body ? O my house !  
I love thee well that art so warm and close !

MARY

Nay ! Once I dreamed —

A MAN

Dreamed — dreamed ! And so did I !  
I flitted naked through a wasting wind.  
Come, Lazarus, wast thou stricken by that wind ?

A WOMAN

Nay — but it is not so ! The dead grow chill.  
Is it not rather like a searching dew,  
Insidious and sweet like stealing balm ?

MARY

I dreamed of peaceful waters. They were still  
And placid as my own content, and lo  
When I must needs divide them with my feet  
They flew away like doves.

A MOTHER

Oh, be thou still !  
Lazarus, heed them not ! Speak thou to me.  
I ask thee of my child ! What was the road —  
And was there comfort for him at the end ?  
I held him till the last, so he might feel  
Some love about him — touched and kissed his  
hands.  
What after that, O Lazarus, after that ?

## LAZARUS

I have forgotten, woman. I only know  
That having died my clothes are full of life.  
If any have a wound let him come near,  
And I will give him comfort of my death.

## A WOMAN

He smells of the grave! Come back—I am  
afraid.

## A GIRL

What is the look, the other side of the grave?  
Is there laughter, singing, feasting—

## A WOMAN

Foolish one!

Do the dead love us? Do they speak of us?  
Oh, if they speak of us, what did he say?  
Lazarus, tell me, and I will believe!  
I will follow Christ! Has he forgiven me?  
O Lazarus, Lazarus, wilt thou tell me that?

## A MOTHER

Say—has my baby grown? Or is he yet  
As I did hold him last? What are his ways?  
What prattle has he? Does my child remember?  
Ah, had I known thou wast about to die—

## A WOMAN

Give word of him, or else thou wert not dead !  
 Does pity seal thy lips ? Does he forgive ?  
 Oh, in his soul there is a grievous wound.  
 There is no love in Heaven to heal that wound.  
 Had I been there I had balmed it, being woman,  
 As God might never do. Didst thou not say  
 That she that hurt him loved him well ? O  
 thou !  
 Thou wert not dead ! For thou couldst not  
 forget  
 If he had smiled and said “ I do forgive.”

## LAZARUS

But I was dead and yet I do forget.

## CROWD

Let him alone ! Revile him ! He is one  
 Who having feasted scants his dogs a crumb !

## MARY

But ask him not. But lately he has come  
 From warm and delicate airs, color and song,  
 And doubtless we are strange to him ; our hearts  
 Seem chill, and even friendliness a cloud  
 Against his deep horizons of delight.  
 Speak softly to him, treat him tenderly,  
 As one new born.

MARTHA

Let him come home with me.  
He has traveled far. And I will give him bread,  
Raisins, and honey I was wont to stint.  
Oh, often have I cried since thou wert dead  
That I had let thee want a little honey  
Thou couldst have had — But now thou art  
returned  
Thou shalt have all. It was so far to come.

MARY

Far? No, not far, I think —

A MAN

But dost thou know?

MARY

Ay! When I keep my thoughts all clean and  
large,  
Open to sunlight as the roses are,  
It lies along the margin of the air  
With a soft shining, though I see it not.  
I feel it on my lips and so they smile,  
And in my vision and it has content,  
And all this common atmosphere of earth  
Has fragrance in it, wrought into it fair,  
And motion and most subtle soft delight.

## LAZARUS

How thy scant dreams persuade thee ! But dream  
on

And tell thy dreams to them that seek to learn.  
For he that dreams has speech to tell them with,  
But I — who know —

## CROWD

Yes — you who know — speak on !

## LAZARUS

Behold I am not asked by these alone.

My eyes have looked on death, and through all  
time

I see them gather that are yet to come.

Even now at hand pale lips of ruined kings  
Beseech me ere they yield themselves to dust,  
“ Lazarus, where ? ” and suddenly are still.

Mothers whose hearts are broken for a child  
Kneel to me, lifting up their empty hands  
In everlasting pleading, crying “ Where ? ”  
Delicate damsels that were softly reared,  
Docile to mirth and mother tenderness,—  
When darkened, they must needs fare forth  
alone, —

Shrink to relinquish all their subtle flesh  
And seek me wildly, having cried, “ Whereto ? ”

And these are but the faint drift of a wind  
That gathers round me. Oh, that wind is pale  
With human faces that blow hurriedly  
And cry to me in passing, and flare out  
Like lightning in a gale — and still it blows,  
The old strange air of them that live and die.  
I hear their garments and their speeding feet,  
Perilous laughter falling into sighs,  
Sorrow that seeks to silence, the great shout  
Of them that are triumphant, and the sob  
Of him that faints by night! The keen strange  
    cry  
Of woman bearing children, in the hedges  
The cooing of doves, the sighing of the blind sod  
That feels a greenness, breaking of bird's eggs,  
And trembling urgencies of flower and grass —  
And a little sparrow flitting to its fall —  
Prattle of children, and the household speech  
Of them that love each other sharply ended,  
The vows of lovers, parting in the even,  
And that old strange inherited despair  
Of them that must do murder! How they sigh  
That have forgotten, and the breaking hearts  
Of them that must remember! All these sounds  
Beat on me in the everlasting wind  
That circles the world and time and Heaven and  
    Hell,

And still the burden of them is “ Wherfore ? ”  
And pale swift faces, whirling rapidly,  
Flee from me speechless, having cried “ Where-  
to ” ?

## THE CROWD

Whereto ! O Lazarus, tell us ! Tell us where !

## LAZARUS

Who has seen Heaven  
May pass no speech upon it. I grow dumb  
And helpless thinking of it, with no words  
But for one only thing, and that the best,  
Since that it lured me out of perfect bliss  
And Heaven was not strong to keep me from it.

## THE CROWD

The Christ ! The Christ !

## A MAN

I think it was His face  
That shone upon thee. If I were dispersed  
Into the various ways of sun and dew,  
A portion of the slow mood of the soil  
And sweet thought of the air, I would return  
And, reaching helpless hands out of the dust,  
Gathering dimly out of stone and rain,

Would rear myself before Him if His face  
But shone upon the world where I abode.

LAZARUS

Nay, not the love and solace of His face.

A WOMAN

What drew thee, then ? The way were cold to  
come  
With no dear smile to lure. What better thing  
Bade thee from Paradise ?

A MAN

It was His voice !

Ay ! Were I feasting with the happy dead  
And shouting with great laughter, I would rise,  
Forgetting love and cheer for ways forlorn  
So that His voice called.

LAZARUS

Nay — not His voice.

A WOMAN

Thou camest all alone ? What swayed thee, then,  
To seek our sorrow from the blessed dead ?

LAZARUS

A great desire led me out alone  
From those assured abodes of perfect bliss.

One thing more fair than they, more keen, more  
sweet !

And I was swayed before it helplessly,  
For the desire of it ; and I rose,  
And stepped from those slow æons of delight  
And by the way I went came seeking earth,  
Seeing before my eyes one only thing —

THE CROWD

What was it, Lazarus ? Let us share that thing !  
What was it, brother, thou didst see ?

LAZARUS

A cross.

## THOSE WHO GO IN FAIRY SHOON

### I

SWEET child, little child, where hast thou been?  
“ I have been to Fairyland to see the fairy queen.  
Her hair shone like the sun to the girdle she had  
on,  
And the robe that she wore was of green.”

### II

Sweet child, little child, how got you there?  
“ Down amid the grasses I found some golden  
shoon  
Wrought with fine work all about, gold within  
and gold without,  
And curled at the toe like the thin crescent  
moon.

### III

“ Those who go in fairy shoon need not fear at  
all,  
If they go at fall o’ dew or with the break of day,  
If they search across the plain, up the highroad,  
down the lane,  
But always will their feet find the way.”

## IV

But what hadst thou to do in sweet Fairyland,  
 And what didst thou say to the queen,  
 Whose hair shines like the sun to the girdle she  
     has on,  
 And the robe that she wears is of green ?

## V

“ She called me her dear and her own little one,  
 She took me and she kissed me and she rocked  
     me on her knee,  
 She took off her golden crown till her hair came  
     dropping down,  
 And she plucked its biggest jewel out for me.”

## VI

Sweet child, mine own child, is my breast so cold,  
 That thou shouldst leave it like a bird that flies  
     out of the storm ?

“ The sorrows in thy breast make it cold to give  
     me rest,  
 But the bosom of the queen is always warm.

## VII

“ Seven girls in yellow gowns always come and  
     go,  
 Stepping soft like golden rain all about the throne,

And if they go in or out, little bells chime all  
about,  
And they gave me a bell for mine own."

## viii

But what dost thou do in sweet Fairyland,  
There where the days are all so long?  
"We pleasure and we sing in the palace of the  
king,  
And thy tears I hear them not for the song."

## ix

My tears are not so loud as to hear them through  
a song;  
It is I who hear them always in my heart.  
But those halls, are they not cold, piled of ivory  
and gold?  
For thou knowest what a little child thou art.

## x

"The world is never cold in sweet Fairyland,  
But the sun is in the garden all the day,  
And the roses always blow and the warm winds  
come and go  
As thick as cherry blossoms in the May."

## xi

But what didst thou see in sweet Fairyland?  
Or art thou grown blind with the queen,

Whose hair shines like the sun to the girdle she  
has on,  
And the robe that she wears is of green ?

## xii

“ I saw the silver swan that once was a king,  
And I played with the dryad in the tree,  
But the one I loved the best, prettier than all the  
rest,  
Was the child that my mother used to be.

## xiii

“ I hugged her and I kissed her and I wanted  
her for mine,  
I told her of my mother, and I tried to bring her  
home ;  
But she would not leave the queen with her robes  
that are of green,  
And she ran when I tried to make her come.”

## xiv

Didst thou love her so, then ? Talk not of her !  
Tell me, in sweet Fairyland what didst thou  
hear ?

“ Bird songs and lullabies, like thine own without  
the sighs,  
And every one I met called me ‘ Dear ’ ! ”

xv

Sweet child, mine own child, what shall I do?  
I who am thy mother, I would I were the queen  
Whose hair shines like the gold to the girdle she  
    has on,  
And the robe that she wears is of green.

xvi

Sweet child, mine own child, for if I were the  
    queen,  
Then my bosom were not cold like the wintry  
    storm.  
Thou wouldst seek it then, and she whom thy  
    mother used to be,  
For the bosom of the queen is always warm.

xvii

“Thou shalt come to Fairyland. Prithee, wilt  
    thou come ?  
I will lend thee for the day my little golden shoon  
Wrought with fine work all about, gold within  
    and gold without,  
And curled at the toe like the thin crescent  
    moon.”

xviii

Little child, foolish child, what do I care  
Though the toes thereof be curled like the cres-  
    cent moon ?

68 THOSE WHO GO IN FAIRY SHOON

My poor feet, alas, would stray, I should never  
find the way,  
And I cannot wear those little fairy shoon.

xix

But I will let thee go to dear Fairyland,  
I — whose bosom is too cold for to give thee rest !  
Thou shalt not remember me, — but the child I  
used to be,  
Sweet child, mine own child, wilt thou love her  
best ?

xx

Sweet child, mine own child, wilt thou love her  
best,  
Better than the fairy queen whose little one thou  
art ?  
But thou shalt not speak of me to the child I  
used to be,  
Lest the sound of my tears reach her heart.

xxi

Sweet child, mine own child, get thy golden shoon.  
Thou shalt go to Fairyland to see the fairy queen.  
Her hair shines like the sun to the girdle she has  
on,  
And the robe that she wears is of green.

## A NUT SHELL

HERE is a nut shell, cinctured fine  
With polished groovings, line upon line,  
With the silken sweep of a strange design  
And a sculptured fate in its smooth wrought line.  
All the mysterious ebb and flow  
Of the life that surges into the tree,  
The vast indelible history  
Of generations of long ago,  
Are written here in the polished line  
And the master curves of that strange design :  
The dream of suns that are yet to shine,  
The washing of white rains yet unborn,  
The silences of many a morn,  
The rugged lightnings that shall rend  
The tough old fibres, and the trend  
Of tempests, stepping overhead !  
Lift in your hand the fragile shell  
And feel the long rush and the swell  
Course through its silken grooves, — the tone,  
And music of a wind unblown.  
All the cool glooms of forest trees,  
Their reasonings, strivings, mysteries,

Loves, deaths, and immortalities,  
Their green dooms and their destinies !

And one small nut shell in my hand  
Contains the knowledge of all these !

## A VOICE FROM THE OUTLANDS

WHEN wilt thou come, belovéd ? Why wilt thou  
always wait ?

Is it so good to tarry, that thou shouldst be so  
late ?

The flowers of the quinces like red dawns break  
apart,

But the time it took to wake them is like frost  
upon my heart.

The battlements of Heaven, are they begirt with  
night

That I should fly forsaken like a faint moth  
towards the light ?

Past the pale flight of planets the zevil waxes  
loud,

But my wings, they are grown heavy with the  
cold wrack of the cloud.

Are those long aisles so lonely that reach the  
whole night through,

And are thy feet grown weary with the full  
weight of the dew ?

Mayhap my love is blinded with suns that never  
set,  
While girls who have forgotten will urge him to  
forget.

When wilt thou come, belovéd ? Why wilt thou  
be so late ?

The stars drop down the morning and the night  
was long to wait.

Come forth to me, belovéd. My voice shall lead  
thee here

Even as a smile that follows the shedding of a  
tear.

The daughters of the angels, they are more fair  
than I,

Their garments are more stately, and the souls of  
them more high,

The white folds of their raiment are all en-  
wrought with calm,

And the looks of these sweet damsels fall plea-  
santly as balm.

Their golden hair all fragrant drops ruddy to their  
feet,

And the flower of their laughter blooms bright  
along the street.

Their lips, made red with singing, bid thee arise  
and come,  
While mine, grown pale with weeping, are faint  
to call thee home.

Yet when they all are singing I would not have  
thee mute —

I want thee to be dancing to the high strains of  
the flute.

There are girls to lead the measure, there are  
feasts all bright with glee,

But those ramparts of pure sunshine have shut  
my soul from thee.

When wilt thou come, belovéd, why wilt thou be  
so late?

My watch has seen the morning, and the night  
was long to wait,

Though I have naught to give thee save what I  
have of fears,

And sighs that leave no laughter, and feasts that  
are of tears.

They say the old life, dearest, is like some slender  
tune,

One flute note through the summer of yon great,  
golden noon.

They say that time shall always like a wind blow  
on and on,  
And touch thy timeless being with the sweetness  
that is gone.

Ye daughters of the angels, smile on your golden  
lutes,

Caress my love to laughter, and feed him on ripe  
fruits.

Make him cool beds of lilies beside some goodly  
stream.

'T is you who make him slumber, but I will  
make him dream.

My love, O my belovéd, why wilt thou always  
wait ?

Is it not dark in Paradise, and dost not know 't is  
late ?

The shout, the feast, the dancing, will all this  
never cease ?

In those white years of Heaven is there no time  
for peace ?

Is there no peace ? but always that sunshine of  
warm hours !

No dropping of cool twilights like dew among the  
flowers,

No closes in those gardens for tarrying awhile,  
To dream or to remember, to weep perchance, or  
smile ?

Thy love, which was born deathless, white, and  
untouched of shame,  
Has sandaled me in sunshine and girdled me in  
flame.

Thy life shall cling forever around my life, and  
be  
A blessing on the altar that is kept fair for  
thee.

Those daughters of the angels, I am more fair  
than they !

I bear thy looks upon me as the proud dawn bears  
the day.

Thine eyes, they are my Heaven, through thee I  
breathe its breath ;

And if 't is death makes lovely, have I not then  
thy death ?

My soul seeks thine, belovéd, as a young girl  
seeks her love,

In the fragrance of first morning and the white-  
ness of the dove ;

Thy world has left forever its lingering breath on  
this,  
And trembles into nearness like lips grown warm  
to kiss.

My world seeks thine, belovéd, as a wounded bird  
its nest,  
Its heart drips out in scarlet through the red  
spheres of the west.  
And time shall drop behind it like a small cloud  
from the skies  
Which hold amid their stillness no breath of cen-  
turies.

Thou art mine own, though always those girls  
rove to and fro  
Who sung thee from the slumber to which I saw  
thee go.  
It was my hands that made thee all lovely for the  
sleep.  
They have filled thy mouth with laughter, but I  
have seen thee weep.

Though light as from the lilies shines in their gar-  
ments' hem,  
Those high and stately ladies, I have no care for  
them.

The flight of their swift coming is like dawn along  
the skies,  
But my love still keeps the vision of the old dream  
in his eyes.

I will gird up my garments and climb all shod  
with pain.

My voice raised high with singing shall pierce  
those walls of rain,

And they perchance will whisper, when the feast  
is at its height,

“ Some wanderer from the outlands is singing  
through the night.”

But thou — but thou, belovéd — so many things  
there be

’Twixt us, as in deep grasses lie the thick blooms  
from the tree !

Those songs of old, the lilies, those nights that  
haunt me yet !

Those dawns ! What I remember, thou canst not  
all forget.

But thou — but thou, belovéd — nay, I will call  
no more.

The keen wind of the morning blows the red  
dawn to the door,

78 A VOICE FROM THE OUTLANDS

And thou hast come to seek me, on whom thy  
seal is set !

Those dawns I so remember thou canst not all  
forget.

## AS I SHALL BE

*No look as of my present shame  
Is on that brow of thine.  
Behold in robes of holy flame  
How lovely dost thou shine,  
As a high star in dawns afar  
Is touched by light divine.*

The look of her untroubled eyes  
Has knowledge of the spheres ;  
That she may know them and be wise,  
I toil among the years.  
She could not be so glad, so free,  
Were I not doomed to tears.

She may not know what roads are mine,  
What bitter paths afar.  
Her feet among the lilies shine  
As white as any star.  
My feet shall bleed to serve their need  
And keep them as they are.

My heart cries out uncomforted  
From folk that alien be,

“Lo, I have broken with them the bread  
I should have kept for thee.  
Have spoiled that wine that had been thine  
Were there more faith in me !”

Lo, I have broken her bread and made  
Her wine of nothing worth.  
Now prodigal and sore dismayed  
I seek the ends of the earth.  
Though I be blind yet must I find  
That good she gave at birth.

Strange is her thought of Life-in-Death  
That works in me alway.  
I know she is that living breath  
God breathed into the clay,  
And like a gust amid my dust  
She blows me all one way.

The burden of our want and stress  
Upon my soul is set,  
That she may know the blessedness  
Of them that do forget.  
So the old scars of ancient wars  
Are grievous in me yet.

When I went down to Hell the flame  
Was blood red in the skies,

But through my piteousness there came  
A solace to my eyes.  
At the pale dead I smiled and said,  
“She sings in Paradise.”

So she may smile and never know  
The perilous ways I see,  
Or how from all my pain and woe  
Her soul takes light from me,  
Her glory wrought from my frail thought  
Shall live incessantly.

Behold in robes of singing flame  
How is her soul confessed.  
The birds of light that have no name  
Are brooding on her breast,  
And soft and fair like summer air  
Her light has made me blessed.

## THE YOUNGEST SON OF HIS FATHER'S HOUSE

THE eldest son of his father's house,  
His was the right to have and hold ;  
He took the chair before the hearth,  
And he was master of all the gold.

The second son of his father's house,  
He took the wheatfields broad and fair,  
He took the meadows beside the brook,  
And the white flocks that pastured there.

*“ Pipe high — pipe low ! Along the way  
From dawn till eve I needs must sing !  
Who has a song throughout the day,  
He has no need of anything ! ”*

The youngest son of his father's house  
Had neither gold nor flocks for meed.  
He went to the brook at break of day,  
And made a pipe out of a reed.

*“ Pipe high — pipe low ! Each wind that blows  
Is comrade to my wandering.*

*Who has a song wherever he goes,  
He has no need of anything ! ”*

His brother's wife threw open the door.  
“ Piper, come in for a while,” she said.  
“ Thou shalt sit at my hearth since thou art so  
    poor,  
And thou shalt give me a song instead ! ”

Pipe high — pipe low — all over the wold !  
“ Lad, wilt thou not come in ? ” asked she.  
“ Who has a song, he feels no cold !  
My brother's hearth is mine own,” quoth he.

*“ Pipe high — pipe low ! For what care I  
Though there be no hearth on the wide gray plain ?  
I have set my face to the open sky,  
And have cloaked myself in the thick gray rain.”*

Over the hills where the white clouds are,  
He piped to the sheep till they needs must come.  
They fed in pastures strange and far,  
But at fall of night he brought them home.

They followed him, bleating, wherever he led :  
He called his brother out to see.

“I have brought thee my flocks for a gift,” he said,

“For thou seest that they are mine,” quoth he.

“*Pipe high — pipe low ! Wherever I go  
The wide grain presses to hear me sing.  
Who has a song, though his state be low,  
He has no need of anything.*”

“Ye have taken my house,” he said, “and my sheep,

But ye had no heart to take me in.

I will give ye my right for your own to keep,  
But ye be not my kin.

“To the kind fields my steps are led.

My people rush across the plain.

My bare feet shall not fear to tread

With the cold white feet of the rain.

“My father’s house is wherever I pass ;

My brothers are each stock and stone ;

My mother’s bosom in the grass

Yields a sweet slumber to her son.

“Ye are rich in house and flocks,” said he,

“Though ye have no heart to take me in.

There was only a reed that was left for me,  
And ye be not my kin."

*"Pipe high — pipe low ! Though skies be gray,  
Who has a song, he needs must roam !  
Even though ye call all day, all day,  
' Brother, wilt thou come home ? ' "*

Over the meadows and over the wold,  
Up to the hills where the skies begin,  
The youngest son of his father's house  
Went forth to find his kin.

## DREAMS

WHEN dreams are thick in the air,  
All at once — like the leaves of a rose,  
Blown from a garden that nobody knows:

While in the curve of each sweet thing  
A sound unborn is lingering,  
Then I catch up my pipes and sing.

But hey ho ! nobody knows  
What the wind that scatters the rose,  
Nor where the garden whence it blows.

When dreams are thick in the air,  
In my eyes and under my feet,  
Soft and clinging and white and sweet,

Each one full of the whispering,  
The memory of some perfect thing,  
Then I catch up my pipes and sing.

Hey ho ! wherever it goes,  
Chase the wind that scatters the rose,  
Up to the garden whence it blows.

## DANIEL BROWN

THE great Lord brought to the making of man  
Wind and water and fire and clay.  
He made him to love, to hate, to plan,  
And bade him live for a day.  
He earned his bread by the sweat of his brow  
In the spot where the great Lord set him down.  
He had a wife, a house, and a cow,  
And his name was Daniel Brown.

He worked, reluctantly, I surmise,  
Sinned if he must and did right if he could,  
He fell in love in moderate wise  
With a wife who was not too good.  
He liked strong beef at least twice a day,  
And porridge at night — so write it down.  
Wind and water and fire and clay  
Went to the making of Daniel Brown.

The great Lord thumbed in the barren clay,  
Touched the dust with a nerve of fire,  
Fashioned the waters and winds, they say,  
Wrought to His heart's desire.

He hammered and built for a thousand years,  
A thousand more He pondered alone!  
Light of the eyes and smiles and tears  
He broke from the heart of a stone.

He gathered the dust of the ancient days  
And the wistful bloom of a coming morn,  
For strange is the thought and deep the ways  
Ere the soul of a man be born.

“Heart of my heart,” quoth He, “come out!  
Thou thought of my thought, go down.  
Be thou a man in the world of men,”  
Quoth He to Daniel Brown.

Restless out of the night he came,  
Piteous, helpless, and vague of mind.  
The way of his will was an idle flame  
That goes the way of the wind.  
The great Lord took no thought for stitches,  
Naked and nameless He dropped him down.  
But he soon attired himself in breeches,  
And went by the name of Daniel Brown.

For forty years he grew merry and fat,  
His speech was slow and his chin was double.  
He had six children — think of that —  
And his good wife never gave him trouble.

His chin was heavy, his eyes were meek,  
He went to his work at nine on Monday,  
He cheated his neighbors through the week,  
And paid the debt to the church on Sunday.

*How goes that thought that hews the stone ?  
How fares that dream in the heart of a man ?  
The great Lord smiled as He sat alone  
And looked at the Thing Himself began.  
How goes the thought of Thy heart's desire,  
How fares Thy dream ? And the Lord looked  
down.  
That builds in wind and clay and fire,  
And works in the flesh of Daniel Brown ?*

*How goes that thought that delves in air,  
Through the subtle alleys of sun and rain ?  
The heart of a man were bleak and bare  
If this should work in vain.  
How fare Thy dreams that flit and crowd  
And beat in light on the eyes of men ?  
Shall these be frail as a little cloud  
That shall not come again ?*

But strange are the ways where their feet are  
led,  
And strange is the drift of the shifting mood.

“And some shall travel,” the great Lord said,  
“Through the bitter ways of sweat and blood,”  
*How goes that thought that works in stone,*  
*How fares that dream?* And the Lord looked  
down,

Smiled in His heart as He sat alone  
And beheld the spirit of Daniel Brown.

Strange are the ways through which they came !  
Those angels with fire about their brow,  
Silent and sweet in their spheres of flame,  
Lived once on porridge — even as thou !  
I have no fear at all for him.  
With a robe of light and a harp and a crown,  
Undazed by the flames of the seraphim,  
Stands the shining spirit of Daniel Brown.

## THE WATCH-TOWER OF THE SOUL

IN the high watch-tower of the soul  
I tarry all day long.  
The days flit by like flocks of birds,  
But not one has a song.  
My soul has found no other soul  
To which it does belong.

In this deep loneliness God set  
Each soul as in a shrine.  
He bade his virgin she should keep  
Her separate light ashine,  
While others on strange hearths attend  
The flames that are not mine.

When I would speak to them my voice  
Falls from me like a star.  
It trails their atmospheres, but not  
The dim worlds where they are.  
Than gulf of time or seas of space  
Our souls are set more far.

My soul is girt in secracies  
Like the petals of a rose.

My breath, which is among them, floats  
On every wind that blows.

They are like sleep around a dream  
There is no one that knows.

Yet that great wind that blows alway  
From heart to heart will rove  
Across all spirits and bear up  
Some fragrances above.

I hear some voices that I know,  
Some accents that I love.

I weep because I feel their tears  
Blown in my eyes like rain.  
My heart is touched by that which is  
The faint dew of their pain.  
I smile because I see them smile,  
And is this all in vain ?

Yet when we smile our looks are strange.  
The gladness in their eyes  
Like a slow dawn is in my heart,  
Like a pale light in the skies.  
But why they smile or why they weep,  
These things are mysteries.

All night I watch from my high tower  
The great world come and go.  
Their faces flare along the dark  
Like wandering stars below.  
But who has seen two stars that touch?  
And space has said me no.

Though his sweet presence like a light  
Is shed about the place,—  
My love, to whom I am most near,—  
I have not seen his face.  
My tears, which are not his, must drop  
To reach his heart, through space.

He smiled and folded my two hands  
So close upon his breast.  
“*These are my doves,*” he said, “*and so*  
*A little while shall rest.*”  
But I, who smiled not, felt them grope  
Through space — they found no nest.

He smiled and said, “*Thy cheek shall lie*  
*In my hand, hollowed so!*”  
But I, who smiled not, felt all time  
A wind betwixt us blow.  
I leaned my cheek into a void  
Of which he did not know.

See they not how alone we are,  
 Like faint clouds wandering, —  
 All these who have not felt the breath  
 Of any living thing ?  
 Do they not know we are alone  
 That they should dance and sing ?

I will be silent in my soul  
 Since God has girt me round  
 With His own silences in which  
 There is no space for sound.  
 Only His voice perchance may drop  
 Like dew upon the ground.

I will be silent and will lean  
 Myself into all space.  
 Love, didst thou think in all this life  
 That thou couldst touch my face ?  
 Nay, for God bade that I should turn  
 Unto Himself for grace.

I will be silent, watching so  
 Thy love-dawn breaking red,  
 ("I thought thy breast should warm mine own  
 A little while," he said.)  
 An we were dead this might be so,  
 But, love, we are not dead.)

THE WATCH-TOWER OF THE SOUL 95

In the high watch-tower of the soul  
I tarry all day long.  
The days flit by like flocks of birds,  
But not one has a song.  
My soul has found no other soul  
To which it does belong.

## PARADISE

“WHAT is it like, in Paradise ?”

The look of love in your mother’s eyes.

“What do they do there all day long ?”

The little children go singing a song.

“If I were there would I sing too ?”

Ay, shout and sing the whole day through.

“But I ’d have no toys there at all !”

St. Peter would whittle you out a ball.

“If there were trees could I have the fruit ?”

Apples and pears and plums to boot.

“But I ’d want you when the dusk grew deep !”

Nay, Mary would rock my child to sleep.

“But surely, mother, I ’d want you yet !”

My darling, no ! For you would forget.

“Forget ? Is that so good a thing ?”

Better than flowers in the spring.

“ But if I saw you over the wall ? ”  
You would not cry for me at all.

“ In Paradise should I never cry ? ”  
They only laugh — those folk that die.

“ Then let me go to that dear place ! ”  
Nay — I ’ll keep you yet by God’s good grace.

“ Apples and pears I ’d have, you say ! ”  
Bitter my bread, yet shall you stay.

“ But I cried to-day for a spoiled game ! ”  
I ’d have you cry and live the same.

“ But they laugh and run beneath the tree ! ”  
Your heart shall break — yet stay with me !

“ Mother, O mother, let me go ! ”  
Nay now, my child, for I love you so.

## A VISION IN THE NIGHT

O PARADISE, depart !

Why bidest thou with me ?

Thy petals sting my face that drop  
From off thy Holy Tree.

Thou strange and lovely face

Across my spirit blown,

Oh, get thee hence a little space,  
And let my soul alone.

Be still, ye angel's wings

That stir this golden air.

My heart is broken for this world  
That God has made too fair.

These wounds of strange delight

I cannot comfort them !

Let me withdraw into some night  
Nor touch thy garment's hem.

## TO LOVELINESS

O LOVELINESS, that softly glows  
Along the blooming of the rose,

That has a heart for darkened things  
And over shadows lays its wings,

That loves amid deep grass to rest  
And lingers in the ground bird's breast,

That strangely shed upon a stone  
Makes it a darling of her own,

That leaves an angel in the hush  
And Pentecost upon the sea,  
That makes a bard out of a tree,  
A temple from a burning bush,

That lifts from out the troubled soil  
A smiling face on them that toil,

That has a home in littleness  
And with a dear touch will caress  
Small pebbles and frail water-cress,

And young bird's down and butterflies !  
All these she blesses and will bless !

That mocks us, most elusive fair,  
In simple oracles of air,

That in the peace of some still place  
With subtle hands will touch my face,

And from the thick leaves of a tree  
With haunting eyes will gaze on me,

That silken soft and dream-enwrought  
Lends her strange color to a thought,

And fitful, in her own good time,  
Lays a scant blessing on a rhyme !  
Briefly it flowers and blushes, then  
She gets her to her dust again !

Pilgrim art thou and fit to roam !  
And yet I know not any home  
Save thou art there. Then let me rove  
Unhoused like thee, O sweet my love !  
No other friend I 'll know nor see  
Save only thee and thee and thee,  
If only thou wilt hold my hand  
The one known thing in this strange land.

## SUCH ARE THE SOULS IN PURGATORY

THREE days she wandered forth from me,  
Then sought me as of old.

“ I did not know how dark ’t would be,”  
She sobbed, “ nor yet how cold.

“ And it is chill for me to fare  
Who have not long been dead.  
If thou wouldst give away my cloak,  
I might go comforted.”

I would have soothed her on my breast,  
But that she needs must go.  
The dead must journey without rest,  
Whether they will or no.

But I had kept for love of her  
The cloak she wore, the shoes,  
And every day I touched the things  
She had been wont to use.

All night the dead must hurry on.

They may not ever sleep.

And so I gave away her cloak

I was so fain to keep.

The second time she sought me out

Her eyes were full of need.

“If thou wouldest give away my shoes

Perchance I should not bleed.”

I cried to her aloud, “My child,

They are all I have to keep,

To lay my hand upon and touch

At night before I sleep.

The earth shall keep the body I bore

And Heaven thy soul. I may not choose.

Let be — I ask a little thing,

That I should keep thy shoes.

But I will give away my own.

Lord, Lord, wilt thou not see ?

Let thou her road to Paradise

This way be eased by me.”

All night alone by brier and stone

I ran that road unshod,

So I might know instead of her  
The pains that lead to God.

When next she came for a brief space,  
She tarried at my side,  
So happy was she in that place,  
So glad that she had died.

“The last night that I roamed,” she said  
“Some one had gone before.  
I followed where those feet had led,  
And found it rough no more.

“And then I came to a good place,  
So kind, so dear are they  
I may not come again,” and so  
She smiled and went away.

Dear Christ, who died to save us all,  
Who trod the ways so cold and wild,  
The love of Mary in thy heart  
Did let me ease my child.

She may not leave that place of bliss,  
I may not touch her hands and hair,  
But every night I touch and kiss  
The shoes she used to wear.

## THE PIPER'S MORROW

Up and down and here and there  
Went the piper playing,  
All he knew to tune his air  
And keep the flocks from straying.  
“Piper, cease,” and “Piper, cease,”  
Quoth the folk with sorrow,  
“Labor now and get thee peace  
And plenty for the morrow.”

Homeward came the laborers strong,  
Heavy harvest bringing,  
Up and down and all along  
Strayed the piper singing.  
Oft the good dame from her door  
Watched him thence with sorrow,  
But he only sang the more  
And minded not the morrow.

Slow the laborers from the plain  
Bring their fruits delaying,  
And the good wife waits in vain  
For an idler’s playing.

Flocks are wandering on the hill,  
Timid with their sorrow,  
And the piper, smiling still,  
Has gone to meet his morrow.

## A KISS AFTER LAPSE OF MEMORY

NAMES, names ! With what elusive wings  
A moment poised on their own things  
And then away as a bird sings  
Above a flower. I have forgot  
So many sweets,— and what is this ?  
Wait, I remember ! 'T is a —  
Nay !  
So small a word and flown away !

How softly crowd the smiling faces  
That are the names of these dear places !  
How swift to bless and bid me bide  
So long a pilgrim and outside  
This quaint good house of speech. But there —  
Oh, the great peace of that strange air  
That had no name, yet was so fair !  
And nothing in it had a name,  
Yet whirling rapidly there came  
Like smiles and roses, things of flame,  
Blowing, ah whither, whither ? So  
Soft presences would come and go  
Leaving a preciousness to pain,

Poised round about like light that clings  
For aureole to martyred things,  
Or that gray loveliness that sings  
A comfort to the heart of the rain.  
Those were angelic ones. But this—  
So earthly warm ! It is a—

Nay !

So small a word and flown away !

O world new-born, that dost arise  
Out of a vast forgetfulness !  
I look on thee with Adam's eyes  
And find thee good, and name and bless.  
Yet it is true that as it grows  
Familiar, named, a spirit goes  
Softly away like dew from a rose.  
That look of thee that strangely smiled  
Has grown familiar — wine and bread  
For something lost ! Where has it fled ?  
Plain folk about, woman and child,  
Where there were splendors ! Ah, who knows ?  
Named, named ! But not to be beguiled !  
And this, the sweet, if I should name it,  
Not such again might I reclaim it !  
Oh, whyfore with a word defame it ?  
  
Poor me, that needs must phrase a bliss !  
Again — again ! Oh, what is this ?

Wait — I remember ! 'T is a —

Nay !

So small a word and flown away !

Strange sweet, that seemeth to have wings !  
What infinite swift flutterings  
Are in it ! Ah, but how it stings !  
But speak it not, for then grown wise,  
Knowledge must come to blind my eyes  
And I shall lose the great first-breath,  
First-look, first-love ! As if one saith,  
“ These things, once told, must suffer death.”  
Names flash like swords before my eyes,  
An Eve that wants her Paradise.

Eve, Eve — that needs must pluck a fruit  
So to get knowledge ! What is this ?  
Wait, I remember ! 'T is a —

Nay !

So small a word and flown away.

Swift is it on my lips and brow.  
Beneath it verily I seem  
To dream !

A moment ? Hours ? Years ?  
These all are in it and the spheres  
Are not more perfect. Nay, nor tears !

Oh, many folk am I — their times  
Blow through me and their loves, their fears.  
Who touched me then ?

*It was I, Adam, touched thee, Eve.*  
Love, love, I could not well believe.  
But Thou, that ever smilest so ?  
*I am that one that needs must go*  
*From thy lips, Judas.*

Be it so.

Oh, break the spell and give the name  
Or I am broken for love and shame  
And glory of it !

Peace : be still.

I guess thee, sweet ! Lay by thy wings,  
Lose thy dear marvels, pleasures, stings,  
And be of these quaint human things  
One of the dearest. Be to me  
A caged wild bird that never sings.  
Be human, foolish, fond, for so  
I 'll have the speech to tell !

But oh,  
For the fleet wings that come and go,  
The swift delight, terror, and woe !

I do remember. What is this ?  
Wait — Nay, but speak it —

'T is a kiss.

## THE SONS OF CAIN

GOD that we serve with blood, how long  
Shall the old debt remain ?  
How long shall we to soothe Thy lust  
Present Thee with our slain ?  
Lo, our hearts break from day to day  
Who are the sons of Cain.

This earth begets a living fruit  
To him that laboreth.  
He brought its innocence, its smiles,  
Its sweet and pleasant breath.  
In paradise this might have been,  
But Thou didst ask for death.

He had not thought to slay the lambs  
That played about his knee.  
He did not know a wounded kid  
Was a sight so fair to see,  
Nor that the blood of trembling hinds  
Would seem so good to Thee.

But since Thou wouldest have blood, behold !  
And yet Thou art not stayed,

For we have slain each man his brother  
And made Thy beasts afraid.  
And thy good earth has sweat with blood.  
Lord, Lord, art Thou not paid ?

We serve Thee to the ends of earth  
Obedient to Thy word ;  
We blow the scattered folk like chaff,  
The lightning in our sword ;  
For still we feel amid our flesh  
The whirlwind of the Lord.

The restless peoples that flared forth  
Have flickered out alone ;  
For as the fire consumes the flax  
Our breath did fall thereon.  
Thy flame is in our mouths, O God,  
Thy fires are in our bone.

And still our shameful tribe drives on,  
Made alien from our birth,  
And in our laughter there are tears  
And crying in our mirth,  
And when we till the soil we raise  
Old dead men from the earth.

---

As once I housed me with my kin  
And sweetly there would bide,  
I kissed my brother, knowing well  
The thing that would betide.  
I slept at night upon his breast,  
Yet by my hand he died.

We spoke that night of pleasant things,  
Our souls were clean and fair,  
And the sharp bliss of angel's wings  
Was round us in the air,  
When that old thought must raise its head  
Out of a hidden lair.

And when that thought had raised its head,  
The room seemed strangely bright.  
The books, the walls, stood sharply forth  
As in a different light.  
My brother's face was not the same,  
I could not bear the sight.

And once he whispered in the night,  
“ Brother, I have a fear,”  
And I replied, who knew the end,  
“ Sleep thou, for I am here.”  
And thrice he whispered, drawing close,  
“ O Brother, be thou near.”

And thrice he quavered in the dark,  
“Art thou not near?” he said.

“Ay, close at hand,” I answered. “Sleep,  
And be thou comforted.”

And well I wot that this was so,  
Knowing that he was dead.

And all night long his silent face  
Did cleave the dark in twain,  
And by that constant light I prayed  
With babbling tongue and vain.  
By such strange tapers do they pray  
That are the sons of Cain.

And as he lay with arms outstretched  
So straight on either side,  
He looked as gaunt as any cross  
Whereon a man has died,  
And to that awful cross I clung  
Where he was crucified.

---

Out through the fog the great north sun  
Flared red at break of day,  
And where the level ice floes run  
Was white and black and gray,  
And twenty men went from our ship,  
And all went forth to slay.

For man is lord of all that is  
In earth and sea and sky,  
And there is never a gentle thing  
But that it needs must die.  
So all our ways are tracked with blood  
And blood they know us by.

And we would kill the wistful seal  
That bode in simple-wise.  
The mother feared me not, but took  
The blow in mute surprise,  
While her young seal looked up at me  
With great tears in its eyes.

The crying of that little seal  
Was like a child in need.  
Pity was on me and I wept  
That I should do that deed,  
But still the want in me cried out,  
And so I let it bleed.

It looked at me with gentle eyes,  
I would have turned away.  
God, Thy desire in me was strong  
That I must needs obey.  
Since Thou didst give the lust for blood,  
What could I do but slay ?

And swift the great north fog drove down  
And found me there alone.

Its strange white bulwarks walled me round  
That were more stout than stone.

And the dead seal stared up at me  
With eyes that met my own.

The fog against my lips was cold  
As the bodies of dead men.

I thought I kissed a murdered thing  
That swallowed in a fen.

I spat the taste out of my mouth  
And found it there again.

And strange as death the great north fog  
Swept down the great ice floe.

It shut me in from sight and hid  
The roads where I might go.

The cold was in my brain and bone  
And I was vague and slow.

But at my feet the little seal  
Did save me, being dead.

The wound about its piteous heart  
Was gaping wide and red.

I plunged my hands in its warm breast,  
And so was comforted.

O Christ, whose flesh inclined to bear,  
So must it ever be.  
It was the life of that dead seal  
That warmed the life in me.  
I clung about its bleeding breast  
As if it had been Thee.

Lord Christ, whose flesh inclined to bear  
That Thou mightst ease our pain,  
With this poor seal, mid snow and ice,  
Behold, how art Thou slain ;  
For still our need is all for blood  
Who are the sons of Cain.

---

She that I love all dearness has,  
All wisdom in her eyes.  
With her fair hands she keeps my soul  
In its first Paradise.  
Her large looks cleanse my thoughts as dawn  
Makes perfect the dim skies.

She knows that when I die, her heart  
Is the Heaven where I go,  
That through her eyes I look on God  
And through her thoughts I know.  
Yet once I said, " My weary love,  
What burden grieves thee so ? "

Now God had wrought a Paradise  
Where we might always be,  
And well she knows for love of her  
My soul is good to see.

"A broken heart," she said, "Dear Love,  
That got a wound from thee."

For there's never a man that loves a woman  
But breaks her heart in twain.  
Yet will she smile with pitying eyes,  
Knowing it not in vain,  
For men must wound before they love,  
That are the sons of Cain.

---

God that we serve with blood, we take  
Our hearts betwixt our hands  
And rend them surely that they break,  
Obeying Thy commands,  
And all the years are stained with red  
And red is on the lands.

O Christ, whose flesh inclined to bear  
That Thou mightst ease our pain,  
There is a long and bitter road  
That lies betwixt us twain,  
For Thou wouldst save but we must kill,  
Who are the sons of Cain.

Thou art not of us, though Thy wounds  
Were hard for thee to keep.

Thou hast not known the wounds of sin  
That sink so sure and deep.  
Beside the grief that lies in them  
Thy woe is kind as sleep.

Thou art not of us, for Thy hand  
Has bruised no piteous thing.  
If Thou hadst killed, but once, in thought,  
Thou hadst known sorrowing.  
But one may taste Gethsemane,  
Yet still escape the sting.

Thou didst not drink the wine of life,  
Although Thy wine was red.  
Thou didst not eat the bread of life,  
Though bitter was Thy bread.  
Thou didst not feel the death of sin,  
Only Thy flesh was dead.

Dear Heart of Christ, it is not Thou  
That bears for us the blame,  
But Judas knows the love, the want,  
The woe through which we came,  
And Judas with the eyes like ours  
Has drunk our cup of shame.

They say that John did love Thee most.

I say it was not so,  
But he that with a broken heart  
Kissed Thee and let Thee go.  
For I, whose flesh is wrought like his,  
I know, Lord Christ, I know.

The wounds upon Christ's hands and feet  
Hold no such balm for me.  
Judas, thy breast shall give me rest  
With heart pierced utterly.  
If thou hast trod the roads to God  
Then might I go, with thee.

---

And God looked down. About His throne  
Strong winds of angels blow,  
But He heard the wailing of the tribes,  
And a woman's heart beat low,  
And He heard the crying of the seal  
Upon the great ice floe.

And Christ looked down from His high Heaven,  
Deep and serene, and smiled.  
And Judas with the eyes like ours  
Stood near Him, undefiled.  
He leaned his head on the breast of Christ  
Like any wistful child

For of that one we hurt, we learn  
    Forgiveness from its eyes.  
Since only Death could teach us love  
    By Death we shall grow wise.  
We know not why — but only those  
    That are the Sacrifice.

For there is a love surpassing woman's  
    That lies betwixt those twain.  
It was born out of a stricken heart  
    And fathered upon pain,  
The strange great love that surely grows  
    'Twixt the Slayer and the Slain.





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